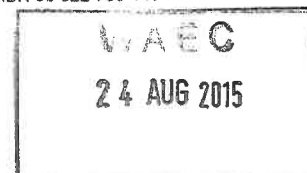


GREAT EASTERN COUNTRY ZONE

c/-BHW Consulting
 PO Box 6456
 EAST PERTH WA 6892
 T: 0427 854 478
 E: hwestcott@wsquared.com.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

ABN 95 022 769 145



Our ref: GECZ 060815

Electoral Boundaries WA
 GPO Box F316
 PERTH WA 6841

Dear Sir/Madam

2015 REDISTRIBUTION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ELECTORAL DISTRICTS AND REGIONS

This submission is made on behalf of the 16 local governments within the Great Eastern Country Zone (the Zone). The Zone is appreciative of the opportunity to provide comment to the Commissioner's as they review the State's electoral region and district boundaries.

In preparing its submission the Zone has read a number of the submissions prepared for this current review of electoral boundaries. For those areas within the Perth metropolitan area experiencing rapid population growth the call for change is strong.

The Zone recognises that significant population growth across the Perth metropolitan area is the driver for electoral boundary reform, with the redistribution suggested being to increase the number of districts in the metropolitan region by one and remove a district from regional Western Australia. This proposal changes the regional boundaries quite considerably. For those living in regional, rural and remote parts of the State this is an undesirable outcome. Councils within the Great Eastern Country Zone do not wish to see their electoral representation further eroded.

In the main, the Zone supports the principles and views contained within the submission prepared by the Nationals WA, ie that the current Agricultural Region boundary and the number of districts within the Region be retained as they are at present, with the exception of the Shires of Westonia and Yilgarn being included as part of the Central Wheatbelt electorate.

The Nationals WA's suggestions provide a practical and simple way forward to ensure all factors which need to be considered under the *Electoral Act 1907* (the Act) are given appropriate consideration in time for the 2017 State elections. While remaining within the statutory permissible limits for variations from the Average District Enrolment, the suggested boundaries will maintain the integrity of the regional electorate structure, maintain the communities of interest, and better balance representation for regional areas.

Given the population growth within the Perth metropolitan area is set to continue the further erosion of electoral representation in non-metropolitan parts of the State will also continue.

Shires of:

Bruce Rock
 Cunderdin
 Dowerin
 Kellerberrin
 Kondinin
 Koorda
 Merredin
 Mt Marshall
 Mukinbudin
 Narembeen
 Nungarin
 Tammin
 Trayning
 Westonia
 Wyalkatchem
 Yilgarn

This will be detrimental to the representation and engagement each regional elector receives in the Parliamentary process if these electorates are to expand or change significantly. Currently the Act places the highest priority upon elector numbers in any review process, enrolments in a district cannot be outside the upper or lower permissible limits specified in s 16G(2) and (3) of the Act.

Section 16I of the Act specifies a number of other matters to which the Commissioners must give due consideration in dividing the State into regions and districts, namely community of interest;

- land use patterns;
- means of communication, means of travel and distance from the capital;
- physical features;
- existing boundaries of regions and districts;
- existing local government boundaries; and
- the trend of demographic changes.

The Zone would argue that equal importance must be given to these factors ensuring adequate regional representation. Inadequate recognition of any, or all, of these factors will on current evidence see further reduction in the number of country districts. In addition to loss of representation these changes could disconnect existing communities of interest and could make the means of travel more difficult for elected members of larger electorates and residents seeking assistance from their elected representatives.

And from the Commissioner's explanation around some of the changes proposed it is clear that community of interest is considered important in determining where electoral boundaries should be.

To quote from the Commissioner's report¹:

"As a consequence of the proposal to abolish the district of Eyre in the Mining and Pastoral Region, the Commissioners propose to amalgamate parts of that district with the district formerly known as Wagin. The Shires of Yilgarn and Westonia have much in common with the adjoining district of Central Wheatbelt and will also be included in the Agricultural Region. The reallocation of various Shires as between Wagin and Central Wheatbelt and as between Central Wheatbelt and Moore was made necessary by the need to balance numbers. The predominant land use in all of these areas is agricultural."

The need to "balance numbers" will result in the Shire of Koorda being transferred from Central Wheatbelt to the electorate of Moore. The Shire is opposed to such a move on the basis that it has limited "community of interest" with the electors of Moore and extensive links into the Central Wheatbelt. Perhaps the most important of these linkages is the one identified in the Central East Sub-Regional Economic Strategy², with Koorda listed with other Councils within the Central Wheatbelt District.

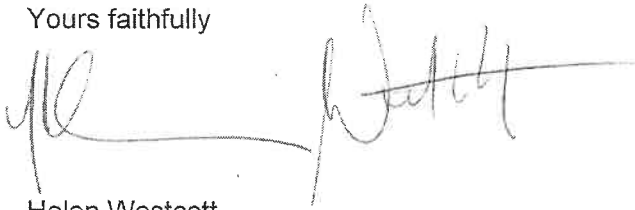
¹ Electoral Boundaries WA 2015 Proposed Boundaries and Reasons by District and Region, page 20. Accessed from the web 20 August 2015

² Wheatbelt Development Commission, 2015. Central East Sub-Regional Economic Strategy. Accessed from the web 20 August 2015

For the Zone there would appear to be only one solution to this problem and that is to amend the Act (and any subsidiary legislation) so that when further reviews are carried out, new seats are added to the metropolitan area without detriment to electoral representation within regional areas of the State. As such the Zone requests that a review of all electoral legislation form part of the recommendations around the final findings for this current review of the State's electoral region and district boundaries. And whilst any review will have no impact on the 2017 elections changes to electoral legislation could be in place in tome for future State elections.

In closing, the Zone again states its appreciation for the opportunity to provide comment on this review. Should you have any questions or require additional information regarding the Zone's submission please contact the undersigned.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Westcott', written over a horizontal line.

Helen Westcott
Executive Officer

24 August 2015